

Response Under 37 CFR 1.116

Expediated Procedure

Examining Group 3617

Application No. 10/583,703

Paper Dated: January 14, 2009

In Reply to USPTO Correspondence of November 14, 2008

Attorney Docket No. 1455-061783

REMARKS

This Amendment is responsive to the November 14, 2008 Office Action. In the Office Action, claims 11 and 16 stand rejected, claims 1-7, 9, 10, 17, and 19-21 are allowed, and claims 12-15 are objected to for depending from a rejected base claim. Claim 11 has been amended to incorporate a portion of dependent claim 12. Claims 12-15 have been amended to depend from claim 11. Claims 1-7, 9-17, and 19-21 are pending.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §103

Claims 11 and 16 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) for obviousness over United States Publication No. 2004/0099608 to Leffler et al. in view of United States Patent No. 4,085,028 to McCallum and United States Patent No. 5,624,535 to Tsuchikawa et al. In view of the foregoing amendments and the comments below, reconsideration of this rejection is respectfully requested.

On page 3 of the Office Action, the Examiner states that dependent claim 12 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. As set forth above, independent claim 11 has been amended to incorporate the allowed subject matter of dependent claim 12 except for the portion stating that the pipes are connected in a manner of flange-joining. Claim 12 was also amended to reflect the incorporation of this subject matter into claim 11. Therefore, independent claim 11 is now believed to be in condition for allowance. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of claim 11 are respectfully requested.

Claim 16 depends from, and adds further limitations to independent claim 11. Therefore, claim 16 is believed to be in condition for allowance for the reasons discussed above in connection with independent claim 11.

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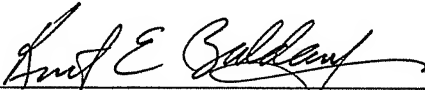
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CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing amendments and comments, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the rejection of claims 11 and 16 and allowance of pending claims 1-7, 9-17, and 19-21.

Respectfully submitted,

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